

SUPPOSED MIRACLES.

AN ARGUMENT FOR

THE HONOR OF CHRISTIANITY AGAINST
SUPERSTITION, AND FOR ITS TRUTH
AGAINST UNBELIEF.

BY

REV. J. M. BUCKLEY.

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1836-1920

NEW YORK:
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1875.

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AN ADDRESS

ON

SUPPOSED MIRACLES.

DELIVERED MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1875, BEFORE
THE NEW YORK MINISTERS' MEETING
OF THE M. E. CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. J. M. BUCKLEY.

*James M. Buckley
1875-9281*

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NOTE.

THE accompanying Address on "Supposed Miracles" was written in a synoptical form, and was partly read as written, and as respects the language partly extemporized. The definitions and explanations are taken *verbatim* from the original manuscripts, and the illustrative cases are given in a condensed summary. As far as possible, the language of the whole is reproduced; and there is not an idea here presented that was not in the address as spoken, nor one omitted that was therein. The fact that it was prepared to be spoken will account for the occasional abruptness of the style of the paper. If any think the manner severe, the author can only say that the severity is directed against doctrines and statements, and not against persons.

The Appendix contains valuable matter not presented in the original Address.



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ADDRESS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, — I have been requested to present a paper on "Supposed Miracles." It is impossible to consider this subject properly without having before the mind a clear idea of the genuine or real miracle.

I. DEFINITION OF A TRUE MIRACLE.

A true miracle is an event which involves the setting aside or contradiction of the established and uniform relations of antecedents and consequents; such event being produced at the will of an agent not working in the way of physical cause and effect, for the purpose of demonstration, or punishment, or deliverance.

This is the definition of a true miracle. A thing may be great and wonderful, but not a miracle. A total eclipse of the sun is an amazing display of God's wisdom and power, but is not a miracle, for it occurs in the established order of antecedents and consequents. Performances by sleight of hand are also often very mysterious, and cannot be followed by the uninitiated, but they are not miracles. To the ignorant, natural things often seem miraculous, even as the aborigines thought the ships of Columbus supernatural birds. In the early ages, when men had not observed nature, almost every natural process was supposed to be miraculous. Hence, the gods of mythology were countless, and priestcraft flourished.

If the telegraph had not been known, and the cable had been secretly laid, communication from Great Britain would have had the force of a miracle to half the population of Europe and America. As soon, however, as it should be explained, the telegraph would take its place with other natural phenomena. But, while great and wonderful things are not necessarily miracles, a very small thing might be a most amazing miracle.

Suppose a crumb of bread to be changed, at the command of a man, into gold, another into steel, and a third into a diamond (I speak not of jugglery, but of a real transmutation); we should then have very little things, — at first, three little crumbs, then a grain of gold, another of steel, and a very little diamond; but the miracle would be as great as if the man were to say to the New York post-office, “Vanish!” and it should disappear. If the crumbs were apparently of themselves to turn into gold, steel, and diamond, we should stand in awe before the inscrutable occurrence. If, however, it should be done at the command of a man, we should admit that a supernatural power was working for him and indorsing him. And it might be done either to demonstrate that the ostensible worker was a “teacher come from God, or to sanction or condemn a particular act, character, or course of conduct.

Such are the miracles recorded in the Bible. When Moses saw the burning bush, natural curiosity was the motive which led him to turn aside and see “this great sight;” nor could he have understood it if God had not spoken and explained his connection with it. The miracle consisted in the fact that an

antecedent of destruction, fire, was present, and yet that destruction did not take place, though no natural means prevented it. So it was with all the plagues where consequents without antecedents were produced at the will of a man. So in the cases of Jonah and of Daniel and his friends. In the New Testament, the feeding of five thousand; the giving of sight to a man born blind (a thing done since by surgery, but here without natural means); the prediction and finding of the piece of money in the mouth of the fish, — “that first cometh up”; the instantaneous control of the winds and the waves, and the raising of the dead, — all answer and illustrate our definition.

a. The events were unparalleled.

b. They were performed at the will of an agent without cause in the natural order.

c. They accomplished a purpose worthy of a divine interposition.

II. PURPOSE OF MIRACLES.

The purpose of divine miracles, comprehensively stated, is to demonstrate that God speaks. This purpose is well expressed in the words of Nicodemus, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.” They proved to many that this was a “teacher come from God,” and his doctrines were heard and received on authority, and were not subject to the mutations attending individual opinion. It is objected that no evidence can prove to those who did not see it that a miracle took place. But those who saw it believed it, and its work

was done. While it would be highly unreasonable without a purpose, it would be most reasonable with the purpose of obtaining a proper hearing for a divine teacher, and it was the only means by which he could obtain a hearing at once. And miracles accomplished their purpose. Christianity got a foothold in the world, and has kept Judaism a permanent dwarf, destroyed Paganism on the continent of Europe and in many parts of other continents, made the New World technically a Christian Hemisphere; and if we take a broad view of the subject, it exhibits as great a vitality to-day as it has possessed in any period of its history since the Apostolic age. And the history of miracles has its place in the record as an account of the means whereby Christianity was established in the earth.

III. THE CESSATION OF MIRACLES.

Very early in the history of Christianity miracles ceased. The question is at once raised, How is it known that they ceased? To that question we must now give attention. I admit that we "cannot prove a negative" by the exhaustive or exclusive method. Yet we can furnish proof, satisfactory to the mind, of many negatives. There are many caves and chasms in the mountain regions of our country not yet explored. Yet any one is authorized to affirm that there is not in the United States a single living mastodon, and that the species is extinct. So, though we cannot explore every crevice and cave of history, we can furnish conclusive and irresistible proof that miracles have ceased, and that the power of working them was early lost by the Church.

1. In the great Lutheran Reformation, and the cotemporaneous movement in Switzerland, believed by Protestants to be a mighty struggle with Anti-Christ, none of the Reformers had the miracle-working power. Neither Luther nor Melancthon, Calvin nor Farel, Zuinglius nor Manuel, claimed to work miracles; and that great struggle was left to the truth, human energy, wisdom, and fidelity, sustained by spiritual comfort and direction.

2. It was so also in the moral and spiritual conflicts which took place in Scotland under the leadership of John Knox. Great was their extremity, but no miracle-working power was granted them.

3. So also was it in the rise and progress of Methodism.

This is brought out clearly in Wesley's replies to his antagonists.¹ "But to all this it may possibly be replied, "When you bring your credentials with you, when you prove by miracles what you assert, then we will acknowledge that God hath sent you."

What is it you would have us prove by miracles? that the doctrines we preach are true? This is not the way to prove that (as our first Reformers replied to those of the Church of Rome, who you may probably remember were continually urging them with this very demand). We prove the doctrines we preach by Scripture and reason, and, if need be, by antiquity.

What else is it that we are to prove by miracles? Is it (1), That A. B. was for many years without God in the world, a common swearer, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, or (2), That he is not so now, or (3), That

¹ *Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, vol. v., p. 165, sec. 28.

he continued so till he heard us preach, and from that time was another man. Not so. The proper way to prove these facts is by the testimony of competent witnesses; and these witnesses are ready, whenever required, to give full evidence of them. Or would you have us prove by miracles, (4) That this was done by our own power or holiness? that God only is able to raise the dead, those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Nay if you "hear not Moses and the prophets" and apostles on this head, neither would you believe "though one rose from the dead." It is therefore utterly unreasonable and absurd to require or expect the proof of miracles in questions of such a kind as are always decided by proofs of quite another nature." In this passage John Wesley admitted that he could not work miracles, and showed the folly of the demand by resting on the Scriptures which had been proved true by miracles. In his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester he enumerates all the miraculous gifts bestowed on the apostles and explicitly denies that he lays claim to any of them.

Truth however requires me to say that Mr. Wesley did relate many circumstances that misled his opponents into the belief that he really claimed the power to perform miracles; but when he was brought to the point he always denied, as in the passages adduced, that he meant miracles in the sense in which the word is here used.

4. I prove that miracles have ceased from the fact that the Missionaries of the Cross in all lands are incapable of working them. These devoted men are brought into collision with great systems, whose priests and votaries support their pretensions by professed

miracles and miracle-workers. And in Algiers the power of juggling priests was so great that it was impossible to subdue the people until Robert Houdin was sent over, whose skill so far surpassed that of the priests that their ascendancy over the people was broken. Not only so, but the heathen are not acquainted with the languages spoken by missionaries. Besides they live in climates destructive to the health and life of foreigners and in regions abounding in poisonous plants and venomous reptiles. Their systems justly claim greater antiquity than Christianity as a distinct religion; and there is no acceptance and but little knowledge of the religion of the Jews. But every missionary has been obliged to learn the language of the natives in a slow and painful manner, often spending years in this drudgery before he could communicate the Gospel to the people in an intelligible manner. Not one of them has been able to "take up serpents," drink deadly things without harm, or endure the climate better than his irreligious neighbors who visit those lands for gain.

Judson with all his piety, Carey with his devotion, Martyn whose name will never die, Cox who died saying, "let a thousand fall, but let not Africa be given up," Duff whose work is known by the world: none of these self-denying men or their wives or assistants could work a miracle in the presence of Pagans, Infidels, Mohammedans, Pantheists, all of whom had their histories of stupendous miracles and most of whom are believed by the people to produce them still. Now mark! these missionaries of every sect are godly men, and from our point of view would seem to need miracles as much as the apostles themselves, but not

one of them has wrought miracles or professed to have the power.

5. The best men in all branches of the Church Protestant, those most conspicuous by their humble piety and self-denying labors, those most blessed of God in genuine revivals, are unable to work miracles. In different branches of the Church are good men and women who profess to be entirely consecrated to God,—wholly sanctified, body, soul, and spirit. And while many who make this profession fail to convince those who know them best that they are not self-deceived, I have no doubt that not a few of them are as thoroughly filled with the spirit and as consistent in their lives as it is possible for human beings to be. Yet none of these good men and women have the power of performing any of the “mighty works” called miracles. A very few, indeed, have substantially laid claim to it, but these have been discountenanced by the great majority and have fallen, as we shall see, into superstitions which render their pretensions unworthy of confidence.

Thus have we shown by the proof of facts that miracles have ceased. If the great Reformation, in Germany, Switzerland, and Scotland, if Methodism had no miracles, if the missionaries of the Cross are powerless to work them, and if the best men and women of all branches of the Church are without this power, then, indeed, must they have ceased. It is said, however, that they continued to the third century. Mr. Chairman, I have for some years past been reading, as I have found leisure, that magnificent translation of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, published by T. & T. Clark, of Edinburgh, in about twenty-five volumes. To say

that I have been astonished, is to speak feebly. Brethren, I am sure that the Gospels and the Epistles are inspired! The contrast between them and the writings of the best of the Fathers is so great as to annihilate every doubt. The fishermen and tax-gatherers, the physician and the tent-maker, must have been inspired. John Milton was well acquainted with the "Fathers," and despised them. He speaks of them thus: "That indigested heap and fry of authors which they call antiquity. Whatsoever time or the heedless hand of blind chance hath drawn down from of old to this present in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shells or shrimps, unpicked, unchosen — those are the Fathers." John Wesley loved them, yet he wrote of them as follows (vol. 5, p. 761): "All this may be allowed concerning the primitive Fathers; I mean, particularly, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian; to whom I would add Macarius and Ephraim Syrus. I allow that some of these had not strong natural sense, that few of them had much learning, and none the assistances which our age enjoys in some respects above all that went before. Hence, I doubt not that whoever will be at the pains of reading over their writings for that poor end will find many mistakes, many weak suppositions, and many ill-drawn conclusions; and yet I exceedingly reverence them as well as their writings, and esteem them very highly in love." . . .

But the fact is that no person of candor and judgment, without a theory to maintain, reading the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and weighing their general style, would conclude it probable that miracles were wrought

far along the second century. That they never saved the life of a martyr, or restored one who had died for the faith to life again, no writer entitled to a moment's consideration maintains. That certain of the Fathers say that the dead were raised we know, but they are of those who believed the story of the Phoenix to be true. We cannot tell just when they ceased, nor can we fix with positive certainty many other dates, but that they have ceased we have proved to a demonstration.

Before leaving this branch of the subject, we will examine certain passages of Scripture which are said to prove that they were not intended to cease. Mark, sixteenth chapter, verses 15, 16, 17, 18: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." John, fourteenth chapter, verses 12, 13, 14: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do, also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

We are told in Mark xvi. 20, "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

Now these miraculous gifts are predicated of all believers, or they are not. But countless multitudes of justified believers, and many who have reached the highest degrees of grace, cannot do one of these things, and never could. This is a positive proof that they were extraordinary gifts for a particular purpose. If this be denied, he who denies it must work miracles, or acknowledge himself not possessed of saving faith. We do not say that all believers at any time had all miraculous gifts; but maintain that the fact that such multitudes have none, proves that though these words seem to be of universal application, they were in reality limited and extraordinary.

In the twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians, the subject of spiritual gifts is fully discussed, and closed with these words: "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." That more excellent way is the way of love. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Then in chap. xiv. verse 1, we have, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Showing that the miracle-working powers subserve an inferior and temporary purpose in the economy of grace. This is argued at great length and brought to a conclusion in verse 22: "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." Here the purpose of miracles is made plain, and their inferiority to the spiritual grace of love implied, as it had in the thirteenth chapter been declared. And we may learn from the Sermon on the

Mount that the miracle-working power accompanied believers of the very lowest grade, even following the use of the name of Christ by the unworthy. Matt. vii. 22, 23: "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity."

From the whole, then, these conclusions are warranted: (1.) Miracle-working did not require a high grade of faith. (2.) It was declared inferior to love and the fruits of the spirit in personal experience. (3.) It was at no time possessed by all believers. (4.) It was for signs to them that believe not, and of no value to them that believe. And therefore the cessation of miracles is in harmony with all that the Scriptures say about them.

IV. WHY DID MIRACLES CEASE?

This question is already determined by the facts and Scriptures which have been considered.

a. Their work was done: Christianity was established.

b. If continued, they would lose their power. Their extraordinariness gave them all the convincing power they had.

c. If, after Christianity has obtained a hearing, men will not believe, "neither would they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." They cried, "Come down from the Cross, and we will believe." But they would not have done so, for Christ wrought a greater miracle than that,—the stupendous moral

miracle of praying, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." The dying thief was convinced and believed, but they would not.

d. Human nature as a whole could not be trusted with the miracle-working power. How clearly was this revealed in the disposition and conduct of the seventy whom Christ sent out. They had been sent out two by two to every city and place where the Lord himself would come, to prepare the way for him. In Luke, chap. x. verses 17-20, their return and Christ's words to them are found: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

They returned, not rejoicing that they had accomplished their mission, that many villages and cities were waiting to receive Christ; but rejoicing in their exploits. These seventy fairly represent human nature. The history of dominant sects and struggles within the churches, of rival factions among good men, and the confessed imperfections of the best of men, show that the miracle-working power cannot be trusted to human nature; and the words of Christ teach, that to have the "name written in heaven" is far better: and this is equivalent to St. Paul's "more excellent way."

V. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES OF ANSWERS TO PRAYER, AND SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

These are twin doctrines, and inseparably connected. If there be no special Providence, there never was an objective answer to prayer. It is not claimed that, in the influence of the Spirit on the human heart in convicting of sin, renewing, and sanctifying, there is anything miraculous. That God cares for us by his Providence, so that "all things work together for good to them that love God," must be believed by every Christian. But the highest good is the knowledge and love of God; and the Divine promise must mean our highest, our real good, as God knows it to be, and not always as we fondly imagine.

Prayer for the sick is, under these doctrines of special Providence and answered prayer, both Scriptural and rational. It is specially enjoined by St. James, in the fifth chapter of his Epistle, verses 14, 15: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." There is ample room for God to work far beyond the region scanned by science; but, when the result comes into view, it comes in the way of second causes, in the established order of antecedents and consequents, else it were a miracle. Prayer for the sick is one of the most consoling privileges, plainly authorized and enjoined. It would have been a strange omission if it had not been included in the covenant of mercy and good gifts through Christ.

We may pray for comfort; pray that no evil may result to any interest neglected; pray for forgiveness; pray for the various graces now called in exercise; pray for such spiritual improvement as will render continued chastening unnecessary; and we may pray for recovery, with the firm belief that when the prayer is in accordance with the mind of God, the "prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

But I am not authorized to believe that prayer could make man immortal on earth. It is the purpose of God, according to the Scripture, that every human being (except those that are alive and remain at the coming of Christ) shall die. And all who die must die by disease, old age, accident, or intentional violence. Hence every person must at some time be in a state where prayer could not and would not save him. When we ourselves or others are sick, the Christian doctrine is, (1.) To use the best means at command,—"anointing him with oil" (this was the common medicine among the Jews, as common as calomel formerly was here, or as quinine is now in malarious districts). The Romanists build on this their sacrament of extreme unction, anointing the sick man for death instead of life. But the meaning is plain. No oil was needed, as Clarke observes, for a miracle; therefore this direction is equivalent to using the best medical skill in the name of the Lord. (2.) Then we are permitted to pray, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." No prayer against apprehended calamity of any kind can go further than this without presumption. Now, our prayer may bring recovery;

but, if so, to the eye of sight it will seem as though the patient recovered naturally, though it may be unusually, and if we believe that the prayer was the element that caused God to interfere and prolong life, to faith it will be a great reward; but the testimony can be of no value to any one else, as of a fact demonstrated in the plane of natural science. But, if the time has come which must come in the history of every man until the coming of Christ, when he is to die, or if the case be like that of St. Paul, we must rest with unshaken faith on the promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee." This is the true Christian doctrine; and to hold any other view is to open the door to every superstition. There are two extremes, — Superstition and Unbelief.

Unbelief makes the universe a machine, bars God out, or denies God altogether.

Superstition is the attributing of a supernatural cause to a natural effect, or attempting to explain events that occur in the regular order of nature by assuming supernatural interpositions as their direct causes. If it rains on a race day, the superstitious say "God sent it as a judgment." If a steamer blows up on the Sabbath it is a special interposition, but if a church falls in and crushes the congregation, these people say that it is a "mysterious dispensation." And it was gravely maintained that a fire which started near a church in which a revival was progressing was ignited by the devil to break up the meeting. Now I should be the last to deny that God brings about particular events to accomplish his purposes, or that he "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," but to declare that events constantly taking

place and governed by regular laws are special interpositions, is as superstitious as it would be for the American Bible Society to declare that all its machinery is run by the special act of God.

Faith is midway between superstition and unbelief.

God is. God is the Creator and Upholder. But He has established antecedents and consequents in the world and these constitute nature, and in their operation are natural. Hence the inhabitants of the earth have confidence because of uniformity, hence there is room for the distinction between wisdom and folly, hence there is a rational foundation for intelligent and voluntary action.

Faith believes in answers to prayer, and in special providences, but "it does not believe that the answers to prayer interfere discoverably with any one law of outward nature or of the inward economy of our mental frame;" that when God answers a prayer or interferes by a providence, the result appears to the eye of reason to come in the way of cause and effect, or at least cannot be proved to be otherwise. He who demands other proof belongs to the "evil and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign." I desire faith which is "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." And to be able to "hold on my way" when I get in answer to my prayer only "My grace shall be sufficient for thee." Superstition accepts natural phenomena and coincidences as supernatural. Faith and unbelief alike refuse them credence except as facts in the order of nature. Faith would refuse to believe a miracle professedly wrought to-day as promptly as unbelief. But

not on the same ground. Unbelief says "there is no God," or else it says that "He cannot work a miracle, therefore I will not believe." Faith says "He will not now work a miracle, for he has confirmed and established his Gospel, and now commands his servants everywhere to walk by faith and not by sight," therefore faith will not believe the statement that miracles are now wrought, for such statements would "make faith void."¹

VI. SUPPOSED MIRACLES.

(1.) Nearly all false religions have claimed miraculous powers. Some would maintain that their miracles were real and wrought by devils. If so we may ask in the language of Job, "Where and what is God?" And if the "Lord be God" why cannot the missionaries work miracles?" But the prophets and miracle-workers of false religions were a mixture of fanatics and jugglers and the fulfillments of their prophecies were coincidences to which the ambiguous utterances of their oracles could be applied.

(2.) The Church of Rome has always claimed the power of working them, and does to-day. And in the famous controversy between the Jansenists and the Jesuits, they played them off one against the other. And the wonderful phenomena which took place at the tomb of the Abbè Paris have a sure place in history.

(3.) Spiritualism, so-called, also produces its physical and mental phenomena.

But the opinion of the Protestant world is settled on Roman Catholic miracles, and this is not the place to discuss the phenomena of spiritualism.

¹ See Appendix, 1.

(4.) The trances and losing of strength at camp-meetings, and elsewhere, which happened under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, as well as of Wesley, are supposed by some to be miraculous, or, to use an absurd though quite common expression, "semi-miraculous." Of these Dr. Curry has said, in his admirable notes on Southey's "Life of Wesley," "That they are not of the essence of religion, nor the immediate effects of the action of the Holy Ghost, is confessed by every well-informed person; that they are sometimes very intimately associated with them cannot be doubted by any but the most perversely skeptical." To which I may add that they have occurred under all religions, and independently of all religion; that they assume the form of an epidemic, and that their immediate causes are now well understood, and that they may be easily produced.

(5.) Miraculous cures are brought forward, especially in a book called "Dorothea Truedel."

Now, without taking the ground that God cannot cure without antecedent cause in the natural order, I do take the ground that all these cases of marvelous and supposed miraculous cures can be explained without assuming any direct interposition of God; in other words, that there are antecedent causes in the order of nature sufficient to account for the effect produced. I do not mean that in every case the antecedent can be pointed out and the process traced (though in most it can be as well as in any natural operation), but that the non-existence of such antecedents cannot be proved, and that their existence is most probable. Let it be well noted that these supposed miracles are all in uncertain realms, where the conditions are generally occult.

1. Health.
2. The weather.
3. Variable human feelings and actions.

There are several things (I say it with reverence) as easy for God to accomplish, if he were willing to work a miracle, as anything that can be named, which it is not even pretended are done.

1. The raising of the dead.

Certain Adventists are said to have tried this some years ago in Northern Connecticut, until the odor of decomposition drove them from the dead body of a girl over whom they were praying.

2. Nor has any person by prayer given sight to one born blind, or whose eyes are gone.

3. Nor hearing to one born deaf.

4. Nor have any pretended to restore a limb that has been cut off.

There is, indeed, a record of a case in "Dorothea Truedel" of a boy whose broken arm was cured in a night. But there are certain questions by no means satisfactorily settled, except to the open-mouthed believers in everything narrated. Was it really broken? Was it really healed? As the animal matter greatly predominates in the bones of children and youth, a cartilaginous formation strong enough to hold the bone, so that one ready to believe would think it healed, could soon occur. On the whole, this solitary case of a child's broken bone may be dismissed to the region of uncertainty, as to the root facts.

5. Nor do they pretend to give new lungs, where consumption has destroyed one or nearly both, and the patient is gasping in death.

Now, as to the weather, it is only necessary to call

attention to the fact that storms and droughts are provided for in the economy of nature, and that the signal corps are proving every day that he "hath made a weight for the winds," and that nature is as uniform here as elsewhere. God can and does control results, but the second causes precede the final result, so that the miraculous element is wanting. Elias understood this, even in his day, for St. James tells us (James v. 17, 18,) "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit."

This great length of drought brought about in answer to prayer was necessary with all its consequences, followed by a prayer for rain, which soon brought it, but not without a variety of confirmatory circumstances to prove positively that God interfered with the established order. But there are those who never prayed for the drought at all, but at the close of it, when the causes had long been at work and are about to compel rain, have prayed for rain, and when it came, as it always has since the creation of the world, boldly claimed, and denounce as infidels all who doubt it, that God brought a rain that would not have come otherwise in answer to their prayer. This is walking, not by faith, which is the highest reason, but by superstition. As to variable human conduct, while God can and does turn the hearts of men, it is impossible to show that the result is effected, except under the operation of ordinary motives.

The founding of institutions which are to be sup-

ported by faith without ordinary means, and the sending of reports and advertisements, with letters from persons declaring what good they have derived from "giving to the cause" all over the country as a means to an end, and that end the inducing of persons to send in money, is an excrescence on Christianity, a kind of quackery of faith. If I were to take up a position like Simon the Stylite on a pillar in the market-place, and declare that I intended to live as a monument of faith, the bill of fare of the finest hotels would not surpass the provision which kindness and credulity would make for me. But that is a kind of business that is soon overdone; and we are wise enough not to attempt to endow our colleges and schools, and support our ministry in that way. And it seems never to have occurred, even to the apostles, to resort to such magical modes of supporting men and institutions. Faith that uses means, and believes in the superintending Providence of God is the only kind of faith taught in the Gospel,—all other faith turns men into the "enthusiasts" spoken of by Wesley, who are such because they expect the end without using the means. While those who use potent means, and pretend to live by faith without means, are not as "deceivers and yet true," but as true and yet deceivers. Let us now confine ourselves to supposed miraculous restorations to health.

There are certain established facts bearing on the question which should be clearly kept in view, and will now be concisely set forth.

First. The amount of strength which can be commanded by the will under an ordinary stimulant is by no means the measure of the actual strength of

the body. There is an amount of latent strength sometimes in the very sick far greater than they ever exerted voluntarily when in health.

Case 1. A hotel-keeper in New Hampshire, lingering at the point of death, as was supposed, for weeks with typhus, saw the flames burst from his barn. "Great God!" cried he; "there is nobody to let the cattle out!" He sprang from the bed, let out the cattle, broke out in a profuse perspiration, and recovered. The burning barn gave him no strength, but the excitement developed latent strength.

Case 2. Mrs. H., a parishioner of mine, and the sister of a most respected minister, had long been ill, and was reduced to a skeleton, and could not lift a glass of water to her lips. One day the house got on fire. She sprang out of bed, seized a blue chest full of all sorts of odds and ends, and carried it out of doors. This chest she could not, as the result of an effort of will, have moved without help, when in health.

These cases are offered merely as specimens of an immense number which demonstrate a latent strength far greater than can be commanded by the will or evoked by a physical stimulant.

But the surprising strength and endurance exhibited by lunatics and delirious persons, are constantly proving the proposition over and over.

Second pertinent fact: Mental and especially emotional excitement often render the subject of it unconscious of pain, which, without such excitement, would be unendurable.

Case 3. A slave had a violent toothache. His master told him he would pull out the tooth without

hurting him. He fastened one end of a wire around the tooth, and the other in a vise. Suddenly drawing a pistol, he exclaimed, "You black rascal, I'll blow your brains out!" The man, frightened out of his wits, leaped high in the air. The tooth came out, and he confessed afterwards that he never felt it. I am assured on the best testimony that this is authentic; and those familiar with the empirical treatment which slaves sometimes received, will see nothing incredible in it.

Case 4. The well-known lecturer, John B. Gough, once remarked in my hearing, that on a certain occasion he smote his knuckles against a piano while lecturing, and seriously injured them, of which fact he remained in ignorance until he reached the place where he was to stay, when his attention was called to the blood.

Case 5. A soldier, during the late war, having to submit to the amputation of a limb, refused chloroform, but called for a violin; and as the surgeons cut he played faster and faster, and so continued, declaring at the end that he felt little or no pain.

Case 6. As many of my friends know, and as the scars still attest, I was afflicted for nearly a year with necrosis of the cheek bone, caused by the bungling of a dentist. The case defied the skill of the best physicians; the face was terribly swollen and disfigured; and often I was obliged to manipulate the parts before preaching, to get them sufficiently flexible to allow of articulation. The pain was intense in beginning; but as soon as absorbed in the sermon, all sense of it was lost. What a common thing it is for public speakers, actors, and singers, to find that a violent cough ceases

during their performances, or a tooth stops aching, or a headache seems to pass away! But, as soon as the excitement ends, the irritation or the pain is perceived. And in battles, personal conflicts, railway and steamboat accidents, how often those who have been assisting others or struggling out themselves, or fighting, as the case may have been, find themselves, much to their surprise, seriously wounded!

Third general fact. The power of concentrated and expectant attention over the circulation and over actions is a factor of the first importance in every case to which it is applied. This principle is lucidly set forth by Dr. William Carpenter in his "Human Physiology" and more recently in his "Mental Physiology."

Sir Benjamin Brodie and Sir Henry Holland, have also discussed it at length. My attention was called to it more than eighteen years ago by the phenomena which I witnessed in investigating Spiritualism, which at that time threatened to "make havoc" of the churches.

I will present a few illustrative cases.

Case 7. There was in Detroit, Mich., a Mrs. F——, a lady of respectability and piety, who was afflicted with an internal tumor from which she had suffered for many months. During that period I visited her more than once a week. She was emaciated to a skeleton but frightfully disfigured by the immense proportions of the supposed tumor. The case was deemed hopeless by the regular physicians. An itinerant "healing medium" came to Detroit and created a furore, cripples left their crutches, and the deaf heard. Mrs. F—— was taken to him. He operated on her, the

tumor subsided in three days, in ten days she was at church and came regularly for a month, walking a considerable distance. Afterwards she sank away and died. Whether she had a tumor producing dropsy, or had simple dropsy I cannot tell. The facts which I know I have narrated. Having been engaged in investigating this subject for years, I had no difficulty in understanding the *modus operandi*, but in company with Dr. J. P. Scott, an eminent clergyman of the United Presbyterian Church, I called upon the "healing medium" and paid him five dollars, to be operated on. Before my turn came several females with chronic ailments, and one deaf woman, were "healed," and the demonstration was complete that his cures were effected by physical manipulation of the most violent character, which started the circulation, dislodged excrescences, broke up accumulations of purulent matter and set every fluid in the system in motion; by the reflex influence of the faith of the patient; by concentrating the attention, exciting expectation, and commanding action which would never have been voluntarily attempted by the patient without supposed supernatural, or at least most extraordinary authority. As there was nothing the matter with me the only benefit which I derived was from the illustrations I saw of his methods and means.

Case 8. Profoundly convinced that the theory above indicated covered the whole case, I began immediately to experiment, and from many select the following cases:—

With a silver dollar presented to me by David Preston, Banker, of Detroit, as one of a coinage of Michigan silver in 1864, the same being wrapped in

paper and applied to the parts, I found that the pain of ulcerated teeth could be cured in many persons so that it would not return for hours. Here there was no pretense of supernatural power, but only the confident application of a professedly infallible remedy by a person in whom the patient had confidence. This I did frequently, afterwards explaining it to the parties, and then the magic power was gone.

Case 9. In April, 1867, a well-known singer was greatly relieved on the evening of his concert, as he then professed with thanks, of nausea and intense headache, by the same silver dollar.

Case 10. In company with a minister of the Newark Conference I called at a house on the shore of the Hudson River to procure a boat. The boat was very dirty, and there was a delay of half an hour. The day being chilly we repaired to the house and there saw a most pitiable spectacle.

The wife and mother of the family was suffering from inflammatory rheumatism in its worst form. She could not move, was terribly swollen, and could not bear to be touched. I said to my companion, the Rev. J. B. Faulks, of Orange, N. J., to whom I refer for the absolute truth of this narrative in its minutest particulars: "You shall now have an illustration of the truth of the theory you have so often heard me advance." He mildly demurred and intimated that he did not want to be mixed up in anything of the kind. But after making various remarks solely to inspire confidence and expectation, I called for a pair of knitting-needles. After some delay improved by me to increase confidence and surround the proceedings with mystery, operations were begun. One of the

hands of the patient was fearfully swollen, so that the fingers were as large very nearly as the wrist of an ordinary child of three years of age. In fact nearly all the space naturally between the fingers was occupied, and the fist was clenched. It is plain that to open them voluntarily was impossible and to move them intensely painful. The daughter informed us that the hand had not been opened for several weeks. When all was ready I held the needles about two inches from the end of the woman's fingers, just above the clenched hand, and said, "Now madam, do not think of your fingers and above all do not try to move them, but fix your eyes on the ends of these needles." She did so, and to her own wonder and that of her daughter, the fingers straightened out and became flexible without the least pain. I then moved the needles about and she declared that all pain left her hand except in one spot about half an inch in length.

I do not pretend to have cured her rheumatism, and presume she was soon as bad as ever; but the operation did illustrate several things; viz., the power of an idea without the conscious intervention of the will to move muscles, the influence of "expectant attention" on the circulation, and of mental absorption and emotional excitement on the sense of pain.

Case 11. After returning to Brooklyn I narrated this case to a well-known physician, long connected with the Christian church. Said he, "I can readily believe it, for once I was called to see a lady, not a regular patient of mine, who had suffered for months with rheumatism. Her case was desperate and everything had been done that I could think of except to

give her a vapor bath. There was no suitable apparatus and I was obliged to extemporize it.

"Finding some old tin pipe I attached it to the spout of the tea-kettle and then put the other end of the pipe under the bed clothes, and directed the servant girl to half fill the kettle so as to leave room for the steam to generate and pass through the pipe into the bed. I then sat down to read and waited for the result. The servant girl, however, desiring to do all she could for her mistress, had filled the kettle to the very lid; of course there was no room for steam to form, and the hot water, boiling in fact, ran through the pipe and reached the body of the patient. The instant it struck her she gave a shriek and said, 'Doctor! you have scalded me!' and as she said this she leaped out of bed. But now," said the physician, "came the wonder, the rheumatism was all gone in that instant, nor did she have any return of it to my knowledge."

Case 12. The same physician assured me that he was for some weeks shut up with this incomprehensible disease. A dear friend was very ill, and insisted that his old physician should be brought. The Doctor, though sick, could not resist the plea, and, bundling up, started with his coachman in a sleigh. The day was tempestuous, and the roads partly broken. The horse became unmanageable, the sleigh was upset, and the Doctor thrown out in the snow. As he saw the approaching catastrophe he became much frightened, thinking that the exposure might ruin him for life. When, to his surprise and joy, the rheumatism left him the moment he touched the snow, nor did it return. This confirms Dr. Mott's

celebrated saying that "none but Omniscience knows what rheumatism is," and also illustrates and confirms our proposition.

In view of these facts, I make no doubt that any one professing to have found the lost healing power of Christianity could make his thousands every year by the voluntary gifts of those whom he should cure. All, of course, would not be healed. But the success of such men as Newton proves what can be done, even when a large part of the people disbelieve in the alleged source of his power. Some Christians walking in the Dark Ages have claimed that he, and others, do these things through devils. But if so, do I do it by devils when I lecture against them? Then is "Satan's kingdom divided against itself!" But if he does it by devils, since casting out devils is a miraculous gift of a lower order, is there not one Christian who can cast these devils out, and stop them, as Paul and Silas stopped those who contended with them? But the case is plain enough to the eye of reason. The laws are as simple as those of digestion and assimilation.

VII. THE CASE OF THE REV. SMITH H. PLATT.

Case 13. The acquaintance between this gentleman and myself, covering nine or ten years, has been of a very pleasant character, and he has had many reasons to know that I esteemed him highly. But he has come before the public in several sermons, and in conversations with reporters, and in a pamphlet devoted to a description of his case, with a claim to have been healed of a lameness of more than twenty years' duration in answer to prayer, where there was no an-

tedent in the way of natural cause. His case in brief is this: He has been lame for many years; a woman places her hands on his knees and prays, and he is cured. In this claim, the prayer having no potency except as it affects God and induces him to specially interpose, it is maintained that the cure is achieved without a second cause. Now, such a case, if proved, has the essential elements of a miracle, and must be rigorously examined on its merits.

1. The first question is, What was Mr. Platt's condition with respect to the power to stand and walk? Was there an organic difficulty, making standing and walking impossible? I do not charge Mr. Platt with intentional misrepresentation, but I do explicitly charge him with so writing about his case as to mislead all those who derive their information solely from his published account into thinking it much worse, as regards the power to stand and walk, than it really was. I shall now proceed to prove, indubitably, and by hundreds if not thousands of witnesses, that he could both stand and walk, and become unconscious of pain under strong mental excitement.

Proof 1st. In the month of April, 1868, the New York East Conference convened in the Summerfield church in Brooklyn, of which I was then pastor. On Sunday evening, in accordance with my previous request, the subject of this supposed miracle, the Rev. S. H. Platt, delivered a missionary speech about forty-five minutes in length, in which he manifested great energy, walking back and forth, and had neither stick nor cane, nor any support. As standing is more fatiguing to the limbs than walking, he used his legs more than he would have done in walking three miles.

Proof 2d. In the month of April, 1871, the same Conference met in Stamford, Conn. At my previous request, the Rev. Mr. Platt, on the evening of April 10th, addressed a large audience on the subject of temperance for at least fifty minutes. Here, again, he stood and walked without support, and spoke, gesticulated, and moved about the platform with great energy.

Proof 3d. In the month of April last (1875), the same Conference met in Meriden, Conn. The Rev. S. H. Platt, who was alternate preacher of the missionary sermon, preached for more than an hour. After sitting for half an hour, more or less, he sprang from his chair, and spoke from twenty minutes to half an hour, walking about and using all his customary energy.

Here is proof absolute that under excitement he forgot pain, and could both stand and walk, and that for a long time. I do not deny or doubt that his knees had been injured, and that walking was painful to him when his attention was not absorbed. But every minister of the Conference, and every person in the large audiences which he addressed, knows that whatever was the nature of his lameness, there was no organic impediment to his standing or walking, whenever he got sufficiently excited to do so.

These facts being indisputable, we will now

2. Scrutinize and endeavor to analyze the history of his cure: and the narrative shall be given in his own words. He tells us of an interview with Dr. Cullis of Boston, Mass., who prayed for him. "The Dr. asked, 'Will you put yourself entirely into His (God's) hands, and interpose no obstacle?'—

‘Certainly,’ said I. He then offered a very short prayer, during which a singular sensation, something like the thrills from an electro-galvanic battery passed downward with a diffusing kind of motion through both knees. We arose, and I stood firmly, walked across the floor easily, down-stairs and back again, and finally placed my canes under my arm, and went to my hotel. The next morning I tested my condition, and found it satisfactory, procured paper and twine, and wrapped my canes in a parcel and started for the depot.”

This can be readily believed, as we have before proved him capable of walking, standing, swinging his arms energetically, and talking very vigorously, all at once, on the three occasions adduced, for from twenty to forty-five or fifty minutes. He continues : “On my way an important errand took me into a parallel street, where I was misled” (why “misled,” if cured?) “into a walk of about a mile, which I enjoyed most gloriously, as it was my first in over twenty years. Soon after reaching the depot, my knees began to swell and ache furiously. But I reasoned thus : if God was disposed to give me such help as he has, he surely is willing to take this pain away. An earnest mental prayer immediately removed it. Thus, all the way home, the least exertion, even two or three steps, brought back the pain, and prayer as speedily removed it. The next morning there was no essential change for the better, and I concluded at once that the Lord had healed me in honor of the Dr.’s faith ; but that he did not want me to be well, and therefore permitted me to overdo and bring back the difficulty.” . . . How puerile is all this. Healed

by God in honor of the faith of Cullis, when God did not want him to be well! But he was healed or he was not. If he was healed, would a walk of a mile bring back the difficulty produced by "a floating cartilage, a chronic inflammation of a low grade," a subsequent "sudden strain," a still later "rupture of a ligament" in the other knee, and a still more recent "sciatic trouble." Again, if he was "healed in honor of the Doctor's faith," and God did not want him to be well, did the divine Being work another miracle to put him back where he was before the faith of Cullis was thus honored. But how simple the true explanation. Dr. Cullis and himself brought his attention, expectation, and emotion into the right state, and he walked off just as he had done while preaching; but no cure was effected. The pain came back, and he counteracted it by "mental prayer" until his faith failed, and then he concluded that the Lord had healed him, but "did not want him to be well." In July of the present year he went to Ocean Grove, taking with him "a collection of narrations of faith cures, in order that their perusal might stimulate his trust." Here he remained concentrating his thoughts on this subject until Sunday, July 25th, about 6, P. M. "That evening two ladies, whom I had never seen, called at the door of my cottage, when one introduced herself as Miss Mossman, and her companion as Mrs. Beach, and announced that 'the Lord had sent her to see me.'" Here follows a conversation in which Mr. Platt informs the ladies that he believes that he had been healed once in Boston, but that God wanted him to be lame that he might write certain books, "which," says he, "I should not

have written if I had not been lame." Concerning two of those works, it may be said that they are unfit for circulation, and must have been the product of a mind abnormally excited on subjects usually as far as possible excluded from the thoughts of decent people.

Finally, the critical point was reached; and, "kneeling, she rested one hand upon each knee, just as she would upon a chair, with no pressure and no motion of any kind, and in a short prayer of not even two minutes she asked for the 'healing of these knees.' I was conscious of no change whatever, either mental, spiritual, or physical, until about a minute after she had resumed her seat, when a sensation unlike anything ever before or since experienced by me began about four inches below each knee, and slowly swept upward with a sort of enveloping, condensing, and toning-up feeling, seeming to permeate every fibre of tissue about the joints, and then faded out at about the same distance above the knees. I mentioned this sensation. 'Oh, yes, you are cured!' was her confident reply; 'only hold on and don't lose it.'"

As they passed out, Miss M. turned and said: "Now hold on; and when pain comes, trust in Jesus. Ask God to put his power into your knees whenever you want to go anywhere; but don't go anywhere unless He wants you to; and if He wants you to, you can walk any distance." He now tells us that the pain returned on Tuesday: "I went praying all day for help to move as circumstances required, and returned in great pain, but trusting as best I could. At last I could endure the pain and mental strain no

longer; and, throwing myself upon the sofa in my study, I cried aloud: 'O Lord, I must have help!' and instantly the pain ceased."

But it returned again. Some days after, "about half-past one in the night, I was aroused with sharp pain in the left knee upon the least motion, and felt that I was losing instead of gaining ground. Then, the confusion that must be felt by those who had committed themselves to the cure, the damaging effects that must result to my own faith, and the injury to the cause of God that must ensue from a failure, threw me into a violent struggle, which was continued long and desperately."

This state of things continued for some time, he alternately sinking and exciting himself to try again in every possible way, until at last, as he claims, his cure became complete, and he is well.

Everything in his case has been paralleled thousands of times in the cures produced by the spiritualist healers, only they put faith in the spirit and in Newton, or whomsoever they employ.

But in most cases their cures are more prompt than this protracted conflict. In fact, there is no reason to doubt that if Mr. Platt had been a Jansenist and gone to the grave of the Abbè Paris, or a Jesuit and gone to the "shrines," or a heathen and gone to a priest, or a Turk and gone to a dervish, or a spiritualist and gone to Newton, he would have gained all he has, and perhaps more. Is it not dishonoring God to declare that he specially interposes, and then to predicate such bungling work as this of him. If God had miraculously cured him, he would have been cured. There was no point in this patient's

career when he was any more cured than a foundered horse is cured when under the influence of condition powders, so long as he was counteracting pain by inward struggles. That he should at last be cured by exercise and the influence of intention and attention, and faith and emotional excitement, and the "fear of the confusion that would result from a failure," is not at all wonderful, as he had never lost the power to stand and walk when under even the ordinary excitement of preaching. It is painful to be compelled to analyze the case of a minister in this critical manner; but when he publishes natural phenomena to the world as supernatural interferences; and when the record, as he gives it, is dishonoring to God, and scandalizes every minister and member of the denomination to which he belongs, by leading the outside world to believe that these things are generally indorsed by us as miraculous, — it becomes necessary to place the matter in its proper light.

Concerning Miss Mossman, the Rev. S. H. Platt informs us that "she believes that the New Testament recognizes three methods of healing the sick: First, by the prayer of faith alone; second, by such prayer of faith conjoined with anointing the patient with oil in the name of the Lord; third, by such prayer of faith, and the laying on of hands." To which I will add, that she belongs to a small fanatical party who claim to communicate the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Her piety I have no reason to question; but these views need only to be mentioned to excite pity for her delusions.

VIII. CONCLUSION.

Mr. Chairman, I shall offer a few additional observations, and relieve your attention. Those who bring forward these supposed miracles, —

1. Have no breakwater against the waves of superstition. The Rev. Smith H. Platt no sooner fell into the hands of these people than he sank into bibliomancy, and gives a pitiful account of his experiences in that line, using the Bible as a lottery, opening it at random and taking the passage “that first cometh up,” supposing the Holy Spirit to determine by influencing the laws of gravitation, or specially interfering, just where the book would open and from just what passage the light would strike the eye. What is this but to make the word given to feed the “flock of God with knowledge and understanding” a fetish? How different the searching the Scriptures and “comparing things spiritual with spiritual,” inculcated in the Word itself!

Case 14. In one of the oldest churches in New York, respected brethren actually offered a goose as a kind of sacrifice to the Lord, and tried out oil wherewith to anoint a brother who was sick. He recovered, whether from the healing effects of the ointment, the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, or other causes, is not known.

2. Those who fancy these things to be done by special interferences without second causes are not humble, but far from it. This, perhaps, they would retort upon their critics, who may, indeed, not be humble as towards their pretension of miracles; but as towards God, they are so humble that they cannot believe that He would do for them what He would not do for Whitefield, when he died of spasmodic

asthma, which had troubled him for years, or for Paul, when he "besought the Lord thrice that this thing should depart from him." Observe! It is not that God sometimes, it may be, often heals the sick in answer to prayer, conjoined with the use of the best means at command, that is in question. It is the doing it miraculously, as previously defined, as they fancy He does for them that exhibits their strange conceit. God be praised for the privilege of praying for the sick, and of believing that in this, as in other matters, prayer often brings what could not otherwise be obtained. But to find in the simplest natural phenomena evidence that God is working a miracle, that we may accomplish something perhaps by no means creditable to ourselves or useful to His cause, is "to think of a man's self more highly than he ought to think."

3. Taken in connection with the new and unscriptural doctrine that there must be a special kind of faith to get what we need from God, it is a notion fraught with the most dangerous consequences. What! A believer may have the faith that justifies and sanctifies; he may be "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light;" yet, unless he has another kind of faith — a kind of talismanic faith — he cannot get what he needs! Thus have they confounded a matter relating to miracles with the ordinary needs of the Christian experience. And when they think that God has thus honored them, from what a lofty height do they look down on those "in the lower plane!" They "return again with joy," saying, "Lord, we have power over diseases, or we have been the subject of a miracle!"

4. In reality, this cry for signs springs from a weak faith. Who has the more faith, the man who faithfully discharges his duty, believing that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and remains lame, or poor, or sick, with loving patience, if the use of the best means, together with prayer to God to send that which is best, has failed to deliver him; or one who continues to cry for special deliverance, and gives up his whole mind to such thoughts and desires? Walking by faith is clinging to God where reason can see nothing, or but second causes, and believing that behind all these is a personal God, our preserver and friend, who has done and will do all that our full redemption requires. Many who have cried out for miraculous deliverances have reacted into rebellion against God.

Case 15. Mrs. S., of New Hampshire, was the wife of a noble Christian man, who entered the army from patriotic motives. Before going, he gathered his little family around him and commended them to God. The father and mother received, as they supposed, a divine assurance that he would be protected. A few days before he would have been discharged both legs were taken off by a cannon ball, and he was brought home a corpse. His heart-broken widow declared that "she would never believe in God again." But she had not really walked in true faith, but in fond hope.

Case 16. When Dr. Samuel Monroe was made Secretary of the Church Extension Society, his father, Judge Clayton Monroe, set apart a certain hour each day to pray for his safety in his many travels. It came to pass that at about that very hour Dr. Monroe

met with a terrible death by accident. Here the faith of his venerable father was powerfully tested, and bore the strain. But that which expects miraculous interpositions would have been overthrown.

5. Great damage is done to Christianity by submitting it to a test which it cannot endure. Those who attempt it walk into the very trap set for them by unbelievers. The spiritualists and clairvoyants, falsely so-called, can produce a hundred to one of such "supernatural" cures. It is a moral and spiritual transformation that Christianity proposes to work, to renew sinful hearts and reform wicked lives, and whenever it does this it reasserts its own divinity. But to hold up such a case as that of the Rev. Smith H. Platt as proof that God in answer to the prayers of a woman confessedly identified with various delusions has wrought a miracle which required to be wrought over again many times for several weeks, is but to degrade the holy faith to the level of the superstitions of Paganism. Believing as I do that superstition is as great a foe to faith as unbelief, and that much unbelief is a reaction from superstition either within or without the mind of the doubter, I am willing to take the responsibility, both here and elsewhere, of trying to discriminate and protect faith from superstition.

APPENDIX.

1. Much discussion concerning the efficacy of prayer arose from the semi-challenge thrown out by certain scientific men of whom Professor Tyndall is the best known. The substance of the proposition was to test the effect of prayer by treating the patients in two separate wards of a hospital, in all respects alike except that those of one ward should be prayed for while those of the other should be left to science and nature only. The writer considers the agitation into which many Christians were thrown by this proposal, irrational and suspicious. But several modes of dealing with it suggested by Christian ministers and thinkers, were most baneful in their effect. A few whose "zeal was not according to knowledge" wished to try the experiment, forgetting that even Christ himself had occasion to say, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Others said "that prayer is offered for all men, and therefore it would be impossible to find any patients that were not prayed for." These did not see that this was in effect an unconditional surrender. Still others maintained that it would be impossible to find cases where age, temperament, previous history, complication, state of atmosphere, kind of food, etc., were absolutely parallel; hence that the experiment could not be tried. This is all true; but many said that if

parallel cases could be found they would not hesitate to accept the challenge. These failed to perceive that even then nothing short of a demonstrated suspension of "second causes" would serve their purpose.

Many denounced scientific men as unworthy to receive such condescension from God. Others went on to accumulate testimonies that cures are constantly being made in answer to prayer, which prayer they maintain was the sole cause and only efficient antecedent of the cure. This testimony took its place with all that mass of narratives which has been aggregated, under all religions and in all parts of the world, to prove the power of occult remedies and supernatural influences, the fundamental defect being that while the recoveries, if authenticated, must be admitted as facts, the demonstration of the cause is wanting.

Those who accept the "*post hoc ergo propter hoc*," and ask no other proof that a thing is the cause of something else, than that it came before it, will have of course no difficulty, no matter what religion they believe, or what theory they hold.

But the most alarming result of this discussion was that many Christian ministers and thinkers retreated from the plain Scriptural ground, and acknowledged that prayer is answered for spiritual blessings only, and that therefore the sole benefit of praying for physical blessings is the good effect thereof on the mind and heart of him who offers the prayer. This will never do, for the New Testament will be torn into shreds before the doctrine that prayer for material blessings is often answered in the thing prayed for, can be eradicated from it.

The true method is for the Church, obeying the in-

junction laid by Paul upon Timothy, "to keep that which is committed to its trust," to proclaim the true doctrine of prayer and providence, and to be faithful to the commission to turn the world from sin to holiness. That doctrine is that we are to "walk by faith and not by sight," and therefore no miracle can be demanded.

But also that God answers prayer for temporal gifts when such prayer is "according to his will," doing this, however, not miraculously, but as the Westminster catechism long ago stated it, "through second causes."

Let then the Christian not give up the vital doctrine that God answers prayer in the physical realm, or be superstitious enough to believe that "gravitation will cease when he goes by;" but rather let him hold that God can and will protect him according to His infinite love and wisdom. It may indeed be better "to be superstitious enough to find God where he is not than to fail through lack of faith, to find him where he is," just as it would be better to "believe all the fables in the Talmud or the Alcoran, then to believe that this universal frame is without a mind;" but it is much safer to stand upon "the vantage ground of truth" and not "be blown about by every wind of doctrine" or conjecture.

If the Christian be challenged to prove by particular experiment that God answers prayer in the material world, his answer is at hand, and from the Christian point of view is conclusive. I believe that God does answer prayer, but I cannot prove it in the plane of science. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear."

And "through faith we understand" that under this surface of causes and effects, in a region which none "by searching can find out," God works in answer to prayer so that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. Since the delivery of the foregoing address, I have found a striking passage on this subject in the writings of Richard Watson. It is a magnificent statement of the very doctrine we maintain.

I refer to his sermon on the "Miracles of Christ," vol. i., p. 145.

"But what is a miracle?"

"It is not every extraordinary event which occurs in nature, although figuratively and popularly so denominated. There may be extraordinary floods, droughts, earthquakes, atmospherical appearances, meteors, changes in the animal economy, and unlooked-for coincidences of events; and yet all may be resolved into the laws of the natural world operating under peculiar circumstances, and none of them may necessarily suppose any special or immediate interposition of Deity, at least in order to authenticate any revelation of his will. Hence not every portent, which a people uninstructed in natural philosophy might be disposed to call miraculous, is to be clothed with that character; nor every occasional remarkable effect which the wisest of men shall not be able to resolve into some known natural law, as the force of imagination in curing certain kinds of diseases and infirmities. The effect may be shown by various circumstances to be natural only, although the law under which it is produced is yet unknown, and may in all future time elude the keenest investigation and the most splendid

course of philosophical discovery. But a miracle is an effect produced by the immediate interposition of God, contrary to, or above the ordinary laws of nature, and that for the confirmation of some doctrine or message as from Himself and having his sanction, though it should be delivered to us by the ministry of men like ourselves."

3. The Rev. Nathaniel Mead, one of the oldest and most highly respected members of the New York East Conference has communicated to me two remarkable facts and has authorized me to give them to the public with the sanction of his name.

(1.) About the year 1839 a Mormon priest came to the neighborhood where Mr. Mead resided and obtained access to the room of a very respectable member of the Methodist Church who had long been hopelessly ill. He asked permission to pray for her. Catching at anything, she consented. He prayed with great earnestness and she at once began to recover, and did recover. Convinced by the miracle that God was with the Mormon priest, she left the Christian church and identified herself with the Mormons to the extent of leaving friends and home.

(2.) In the same locality a gentleman, a member of the church, had been severely injured by a heavy bar of iron which fell upon his foot, mangling and crushing it. This same Mormon priest prayed with him with a similar result, the wound healed very soon, and the man was converted to Mormonism.

If such cases as this of Mr. Platt's are to be believed special interpositions of Providence, miraculous answers to prayer, then the Mormon prayers must be accepted and the notorious Brigham Young, the chief

of those prophets, must be admitted a "teacher come from God."

But the Mormon did it as Miss Mossman did it, and they, "being ignorant of the law" whereby these things are done, call it supernatural. But superstition is superstition wherever it exists.

(4.) The "Advance" of October 14 contains an able article on this subject from the pen of H. M. Lyman, M. D., of Chicago, and I make the following extracts as clear, convincing, and confirmatory of the view advanced.

"Are these to be considered examples of a supernatural interposition working miracles in contravention of ordinary natural laws? I cannot so consider them. Marvelous enough they may be, but in no sense miraculous. Not for one moment are they to be ranked in the same category with the miracles wrought by the Lord Jesus. They are simply examples of the well-known effects of powerful cerebral excitement in connection with certain nervous diseases, or with certain consequences of previous disease. Let us examine, for instance, the case of Mr. Platt. His knees had both been injured and inflamed. Every surgeon is aware of the serious nature of such an accident, and is familiar with the great length of time often necessary to recovery. Few but surgeons, moreover, are aware of the fact that in such cases there often comes a time when the joint is really cured, so far as the inflammation caused by the injury is concerned, but the patient cannot use the limb. The joint, if left to itself, continues stiff and painful. The sufferer hobbles around with a crutch, and gradually sinks into the conviction that his knee has not been

cured and never can be. The crutch becomes more and more necessary. The joint grows stiffer and weaker. Rheumatic pains often manifest themselves in the disabled member ; and the unfortunate sufferer is a cripple for life. Aware of this fact, the intelligent practitioner takes measures to avoid such a misfortune. He removes the inflammation by appropriate measures. He takes note of the time when the joint has ceased to be the seat of diseased action, and straightway begins passive motion, employing every means to restore vigor to the muscles which have become enfeebled through long disuse, and encourages the patient to make every possible effort to sustain himself and to walk without help. It is often difficult to accomplish this result at the first endeavor, and in nothing is the patience of the surgeon more thoroughly taxed than in the effort to inspire a feeble patient with faith in his legs and in his joints, while the sense of pain is continually convincing him that they are useless as instruments of locomotion. Unless gifted with a strong will and a buoyant temper, the best of physicians may fail in this task. But, even then, such patients may be at any time restored by proper manipulations, without the exercise of any special mental effort or act of faith on the part of the individual ; and they may also be made to take up their beds and to walk, under the influence of any overwhelming idea which excites, voluntarily or involuntarily, the belief that they must or can use their legs again. Such cures are sometimes permanent, but sometimes they are followed by a relapse.

Mr. Platt tells us that he was cured once by the prayer of Dr. Cullis, but the effort of walking soon

became too painful to be endured, and he was as badly off as ever. His most recent cure was effected under more favorable circumstances. His will had been wrought up to the resolve that he would act as if he were cured, let the consequences be what they might. Change of air, a salubrious locality, and agreeable mental occupation combined to invigorate an enfeebled frame. He walked as if he were a well man, and persisted in so doing, in spite of the pain at first induced by such an unaccustomed effort. He found that he could do more than he had thought possible ; he persevered, and was rewarded as every one in similar circumstances will be. In all this there is only the operation of natural causes — nothing whatever that can be called supernatural or miraculous.

Cases like that of Mrs. Miller, and of the little cripple girl seem at first sight to be more nearly deserving the term miraculous, but they are strictly analogous to the case of Mr. Platt. They were examples of a form of nervous disease, in which the patient suffers fearfully, is frequently crippled, bedridden, or incapable of performing some natural function, is seldom benefited by any known medicine, and if ever restored to health is cured suddenly under the influence of some kind of powerful mental excitement. The cause of the excitement makes very little difference ; — it may be the sudden exaltation produced by a fervent prayer, or it may be the agitation aroused by a decidedly worldly ambition. In the “*Medical Times and Gazette*” for October 13, 1866, Mr. Skey records the case of a young lady of sixteen, who for many months had been suffering from inversion of the left foot, which was twisted at right angles with the other, and was treated

by orthopædic surgeons with an elaborate apparatus of splints. Neither they nor Mr. Skey (though he recognized the nature of the affection) succeeded in curing it. Psychical agents, however, effected a cure in a few minutes. She accompanied her family to a ball, her foot, as she entered the ball-room, being not yet restored to its normal position. She was invited to dance, and under this novel excitement she stood up, and to the astonishment of her family, she danced the whole evening, having almost suddenly recovered the healthy, muscular action of the limb. "She came to see me," adds Mr. Skey, "two days afterward. She walked perfectly well into my room, and paced the room backwards and forwards with great delight. The actions of the limb were thoroughly restored, and all trace of the previous malady had disappeared."

If this sudden reëstablishment of the connection between the will and the motor-nerve-centres had taken place during the perspiration of a prayer-meeting instead of a dance, I doubt not there are thousands of people who would consider it a supernatural interposition in answer to prayer. As a general rule, however, these cures occur under the hands of some traveling quack, whose coming has been heralded from afar, who, with a great parade of pseudo-miraculous power bids the disease depart, and it departs.

The case of the lady in Piermont, N. H., affords a very interesting example of the manner in which an excitable organization may be wrought up to the very borders of insanity with results of a very decidedly beneficial character. And yet the risks attending such a process are too great to render it desirable even as a means of cure."

